

FRAMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE Minutes of the FGP Committee Meeting held remotely on Tuesday, 10 November 2020, at 7 pm.

Present: Councillors Keith Brandon (Chairman), Tony Hall (Vice Chairman) and Maria Naylor.
In attendance: Ann Newton (Parish Clerk). Marie Owen (RFO).
Public: None.

On 4 April 2020, the Government brought the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 into force to allow local authorities to conduct meetings remotely. Members of the public still have the right to attend and will be given the link for the meeting prior to the meeting. However, questions from the public should be received 2 days in advance of the meeting by email to the Parish Clerk.

All recommendations detailed in the minutes are for ratification at the next full Council meeting on 24 November 2020. Items containing staff or contractual matters were held in exempt session as agreed by the Chairman/Vice Chairman.

1. Apologies

Councillor Peter Friend. Peter had sent in comments on the agenda items which were taken into consideration during discussions.

2. Declarations of Interest, personal, prejudicial or pecuniary.

Councillors to give notice of declarations of personal, prejudicial and pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda. There were none.

3. To accept the Minutes of the last meeting (11 November 2019)

It was resolved to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2019, having been circulated, as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The Chairman proposed their adoption which was seconded by Maria Naylor and agreed by all present. The minutes will be signed at the first available opportunity.

4. Matters arising

Matters arising from the last minutes which are not detailed elsewhere on the agenda.

- Emergency Plan – ongoing.
- Donations/Grant Policy – ongoing. The Chairman explained that he had proposed to have the draft available for this meeting but discovered that all Council policies needed updating so would bring them all together for ratification at a later date.

5. Items for Discussion.

General Administration

- Adoption of the Parish Asset List – Councillors agreed the revised List to include the addition of a lawnmower which has also been included on the Council's insurance policy.
- Adoption of the Parish Council Risk Assessment – Councillors agreed the revised Risk Assessment which now incorporated minor changes in line with the need to have flexibility to operate under reviewed Government legislation in such times as Covid 19.
- Adoption of the Financial Regulations – on website - no changes.
- Adoption of the Standing Orders – on website - no changes.

All of the above were proposed for agreement by Tony Hall, seconded by Maria Naylor and agreed by all.

- ESCC: Urban Grass-cutting 2021-22. The Clerk detailed proposals from ESCC offering the Council four extra cuts of the urban grassed areas within the Parish for the price of £821.00 per annum – no change from this year. The Council agreed to continue with the cuts (TH/MN). The Clerk advised the Council that representations have been made from a Framfield resident asking for the verges not to be cut in the

lanes to protect the wildlife. The Clerk was asked to write back to the resident explaining that for safety purposes the Parish Council would agree to the extra cuts of the grassed areas classified as urban as these were predominantly along the main roads. The lanes only receive two cuts per year and this is completely under the jurisdiction of ESCC. Any areas of grass can be protected by a Wildlife Verge Application (ESCC) as are some areas already within the Parish.

- Grounds Maintenance Contract 2021,2022 and 2023. All Councillors had been given a report on the tenders received which varied greatly in price. The meeting agreed that the contract should be awarded to the current contractor as proposed by Keith Brandon, seconded by Maria Naylor and agreed by all. The contractor would be reminded of some of the new stipulations within the contract.
- Parish Magazine 2021-22 – the Clerk had circulated a report on the financial situation of the Magazine. Councillors agreed that the Magazine was a valued community asset especially in the digital age when a percentage of residents still do not have access to the internet. They agreed to subsidise the Magazine for the 2021/22 year to enable the advertisers to be offered one year's free advertising, many of whom might have had little or no business during the year due to Covid 19. They would be asked to make a donation should their financial position allow. This might encourage them to advertise the following year. The Church as the dual partner in the Magazine would be advised. The meeting thought the idea of obtaining some actual sponsors for the Magazine going forwards would be ideal.
- Parish Council meeting dates for 2021 - circulated.

Staffing

- Staff Salary Review – 2020/21. Following a briefing by the Chairman, the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer were awarded an increase of one point on the scales in line with the NALC recommendations. This was seconded by Maria Naylor and agreed by all.
- Grounds Manager:
 - Permanent contract - following 6 months satisfactory employment. This was proposed by Tony Hall, seconded by Maria Naylor and agreed by all.
 - Allocation of salary. The meeting agreed to split the salary costs as follows: Parish Council – 50% and each Trust 25%. This could be reviewed if the balance of work changed. The meeting further agreed to allocate a budget for materials and a mechanism for approving overtime. The overall budget had not been increased because effectively the Grounds Manager had replaced the Handyman and Caretaker both of whom had wished to retire.
- Resolve to move the Clerk's annual gratuity (pension sum) into the relevant account. This was agreed (MN/TH).

Finance

1. CIL receipts – received to date – included in finance pack. Councillors discussed items which could be financed by CIL receipts – repairs to bus shelters, new seats, works to the halls. Clerk to also make contact regarding the donation in 2018.
2. Draft Budget for discussion/update on bank balances and PC budget versus spend – all Councillors were in receipt of a full report including budget notes/recommendations for 2021/22, cashflow forecast and spend to date.
 - a. The provisional recommendation to Full Council was to set the budget and precept for 2021/22 at £66,680.
 - b. An increase of £4,360 from this year, estimated at an 8.5% increase equating to £5.61 per year for a Band D household. The Council believes the increase is needed to cover the additional costs incurred due to Covid 19 which was not budgeted for last year. The cost of spraying the three play areas has totalled £1,380 to date and it is expected that the need for spraying will continue for the foreseeable future. Additional funds (£2,000) have also been allocated for repairs to streetlighting due to the age and deterioration of the village lights.
 - c. The figure is estimated because the tax base is not yet known. The actual increase will also be 'diluted' because of extra households coming on line during the year.
 - d. Once the accurate figure is known further discussion would take place on whether to take the subsidy for the Parish Magazine out of reserves or add it to the precept requirements.
 - e. Consideration could also be given at that time to the potential reduction in increase of precept taking the balance out of reserves.

(This was proposed for agreement and recommendation to Full Council by the Chairman, seconded by Maria Naylor and agreed by all present).

3. Review/confirmation of reserves. All Councillors were in receipt of the list and agreed them as written.
4. Cross-checking of payments – the meeting held remotely did not carry out any cross checks of payments. This would be rectified at the first available opportunity.

6. Items for referral by Councillors to the next appropriate Committee or Full Council agenda.

The Clerk informed the meeting that confirmation had recently been received that the External Auditor had approved the accounts. This would be included in the agenda for the next Full Council meeting.

7. Next Committee Meeting

To be arranged.

The meeting was closed at 9.20 pm.

Chairman..... Date